

Risks ahead for cattle producers

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

While the cattle industry is unlikely to see the pandemic-related problems it faced in 2020, there are still risks for producers this year.

As seen in the early months of the pandemic, there was no capacity in the meatpacking system to adjust to disruption, and that risk remains, said Shannon Neibergs, an economist and director of Western Extension Risk Management Education Center at Washington State University.

On the positive front, the beef cow inventory is declining and trending to a level that supports higher prices throughout the cattle industry. Beef production increased year over year to record levels in 2019 before leveling out, and demand is strong. Retail beef prices have increased 42% from 2011, he said during a webi-



Ryan Brennecke/EO Media Group/Bend Bulletin

Drought will impact many cattle producers this year, analysts say.

nar presented by Northwest Farm Credit Services.

Cattle prices should be supported by economic recovery from the pandemic with retail support maintained, enhanced food-service and strong export demand, he said.

“So all the demand side right now is projected to be improving and projected to support those prices,” he said.

But drought is going to be a significant management risk for the cattle industry. The latest Drought Monitor shows 43% of the total U.S. cattle inventory is in drought areas. The drought’s effect on hay and corn is also going to be important, he said.

Cattle producers have already been feeding into the Dec. 1 hay stocks. Those hay stocks in the Pacific

Northwest were even with the past three-year average. They were lower in the Southwest, particularly in Nevada and New Mexico, he said.

Dec. 1 stocks were about even in Montana, the Dakotas and Nebraska, but it won’t be known until spring how heavily producers in those states had to feed due to dry range conditions, he said.

In addition, early planting intentions forecast U.S. hay acres are being converted to corn based on high corn prices, he said.

“Here in the basin in Washington, one of the strategies is going to be to take the first cutting of alfalfa off and then convert to corn, he said.

There have also been disruptions in hay exports from the West Coast due to shipping container shortages, and the export hay market drives hay price trends, he said.

Idaho Potato Commission CEO Muir sets retirement

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Idaho Potato Commission President and CEO Frank Muir plans to retire in mid-September.

He prioritized national branding and marketing since leaving a well-established corporate career in those disciplines in 2003 to join IPC.



Frank Muir

“I was hired as an outside hired gun to do real marketing, and that’s what we’ve tried to do the past 18 years — to re-establish the Idaho potato brand and to make it relevant in a society that’s constantly changing,” Muir said.

Idaho produces nearly one-third of all U.S. potatoes and is the nation’s top producer.

Muir “could stretch a marketing dollar farther than any person I’ve ever known,” said commission board Chairman Todd Cornelison of High Country Potato, a shipper in Rexburg. “He always used the term ‘leverage,’ and he was a master at it.”

For example, separate recent television commercials by IPC and a national potato processor benefited the commission’s Idaho potato brand.

Cornelison said the commission is yet to establish the process it will use to pick a successor.

“We are going to be hard-pressed to fill Frank Muir’s shoes,” he said. “The search will be broad, to include all industries outside the potato industry.”

Muir said the board will have to decide what background and skill set it wants — a traditional executive director versus a marketing specialist, for example. If it were up to him, the board would “keep the pedal to the metal” in national advertising and promotion.

“It’s a complex indus-

try with lots of opinions,” he said.

Muir arrived as low-carbohydrate diets dragged demand. He and the commission went on to advertise nationally, helped by the American Heart Association in 2011 certifying the state’s fresh potatoes as heart-healthy.

Farm-gate revenue roughly doubled during his tenure, boosted by national marketing as well as yield gains. The commission has several high-profile sponsorships and continues to develop national retail, food-service and online promotions. It also helped redirect potatoes between customer sectors where needed amid various COVID-19 impacts.

A 2006-2007 Pale Cyst Nematode outbreak led to some field quarantines and lasting regulatory impacts that left some growers feeling the commission didn’t advocate for them.

Recently, some growers in the state’s high-volume east sought more representation on the board. And branding-fueled price premiums don’t always filter down to the grower, due to supply-and-demand factors and other market dynamics.

“We appreciate his service, but we look forward to ushering in a new era with new vision and new leadership,” said Stephanie Mickelsen, a PCN-impacted grower near Idaho Falls.

“Some marketing and promotion does need to happen,” she said. A question has been “if some promotion programs are really returning the value of what they are spending.”

IPC answers yes, citing the farm-gate revenue jump and the consumer “impressions” national advertising and sponsorships generate. It says it spends much less than many national consumer brands.

Muir, 65, said that in retirement, he plans to spend more time with grandchildren and on church-related service. He has also had some inquiries about doing consulting.

Phased approach doesn’t dim opposition to Oregon overtime bill

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

A proposed phase-out of Oregon’s agricultural exemption for higher overtime wages doesn’t appear to have dimmed the farm community’s opposition to the bill.

House Bill 2358 would require farmers to pay their workers one-and-a-half times their regular wages if they work longer than 40 hours per week.

Growers are currently exempt from that requirement, which applies to most other industries, and many argue the bill would force them to reduce work schedules to avoid the higher labor expenses.

Due to feedback about the bill’s economic impacts, Rep. Andrea Salinas, D-Lake Oswego, has proposed an amendment under which higher overtime wages would be required beyond 50 hours per week in

2022, 45 hours per week in 2023 and 40 hours per week in 2024.

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 excluded farm workers from higher overtime pay due to “racism and bigotry,” Salinas said.

While Oregon farmers have only inherited this exemption, they can help dismantle it, she said.

The Oregon Farm Bureau and several other agricultural organizations are urging lawmakers to reject the amendment, arguing the change would simply draw out the process of farmers limiting work hours, increasing mechanization or shifting to other crops.

“Farmers are price takers, and the economics of agriculture provide no other option but to control costs,” the groups said in written testimony.

The Oregon Association of Nurseries doesn’t deny the racist motivations for FLSA’s overtime exemption but the

appropriate “fix” would be changing the law nationally, so competitors in other states don’t have an advantage over Oregon farmers, said Elizabeth Remley, the group’s lobbyist.

Remley urged lawmakers against taking action on HB 2358 and instead spend more time on a solution that accounts for the numerous benefits that Oregon farmers provide their workers.

Those benefits, including health insurance, childcare, free housing and bonuses, would have to be cut by farmers who are unable to limit work schedules to 40 hours per week, according to the bill’s opponents.

The bill’s proponents countered that HB 2358’s alleged financial burdens are greatly exaggerated.

California passed legislation that will end the state’s agricultural overtime exemption while Washington is preparing to do the same, said Alicia Temple, legislative

advocate for the Oregon Law Center, which advocates for laborers.

Oregon farmers will have trouble recruiting workers if they’re known to pay less than growers in those neighboring states, she said.

Christmas tree farms didn’t qualify for the agricultural overtime exemption due to a legal interpretation that stood for nearly 20 years, yet such operations didn’t cease production, Temple said. “It is a myth that the industry cannot survive paying overtime.”

“No one has cried wolf more often” than farmers and their lobbyists about labor reforms in the past, but the economic devastation “never materializes,” said Mark Brenner, a labor economist at the University of Oregon.

A study at the University of Massachusetts determined that overtime pay for farmworkers only increased labor costs by 5%, or about 1.6% of an average farm’s revenue, Brenner said.

Washington farm groups turn against overtime bill

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — Washington farm groups are now opposing a Senate bill grant-

ing farmworkers time-and-a-half pay after 40 hours in a week, unless the House lifts the threshold to 50 hours for 12 weeks a year.

Previously, farm groups lukewarmly embraced Senate Bill 5172 as an alternative to courts fleshing out a state Supreme Court ruling mandating overtime. The bill phases in overtime pay and gives farms some protection from back-pay lawsuits.

The protections, however, are not strong enough, Washington Farm Bureau associate director of government relations Bre-

anne Elsey said. The bill also doesn’t acknowledge the seasonal nature of farm work, she said.

“Without it, the bill is not worth moving forward, Elsey told the House Appropriations Committee on Tuesday.

A parade of witnesses made the same points. The Supreme Court’s ruling made overtime pay for farmworkers a foregone conclusion, but lawmakers could still shape the law to help farm owners and their employees, they said.

“Overtime is coming, and we need a workable solution,” King County farmer Rosella Mosby said. “Without a seasonality amendment, you will put farms out of business faster than you will help farmworkers.”

The court’s 5-4 decision upset a 61-year-old

law. Three justices signed a concurring opinion, arguing that the state needed to protect farmworkers from being overworked, drawing a parallel between farmworkers and foster children.

Western Washington farmworker Adiana Salazar said she likes having time in the winter to spend with her child. If she’s held to 40 hours during the busiest weeks, she will have to find a second job, she said.

“Where is the data to back up that (the court’s) decision won’t hurt farms and farmworkers like me?” she asked.

The Washington State Labor Council will oppose the bill if lawmakers lift the 40-hour threshold for peak seasons, government affairs director Joe Kendro warned the committee.

“A seasonal carve-out

would actually further invite litigation, questioning the constitutionality of perpetuating that double standard,” Kendro said.

The court ruled that not paying dairy workers time-and-a-half after 40 hours violated the state constitution because farm work is dangerous. The decision opened the way for dozens of lawsuits seeking to apply the decision retroactively, for up to three years under the state law.

The Senate bill bars the lawsuits. Farm groups, however, want to tighten up the bill to foreclose the state from suing farms. Also, the Legislature may pass a bill this year that allows private attorneys to act on behalf of the state and sue for unpaid wages.

“A three-year retroactive suit would jeopard-

dize a majority of family owned orchards, specifically those that are owned by minority or disadvantaged farmers,” Okanogan County farmer Flor de Marie Maldonado said.

If the Legislature doesn’t pass an overtime bill this session, the law could be shaped by court decisions. Lawmakers also could take up the issue next year, possibly before any precedent-setting ruling.

The Supreme Court did not rule on whether its decision applied to the past three years, nor was the court explicit about whether the ruling applied to all farmworkers, not just dairy workers.

The court’s concurring and dissenting opinions, however, assumed the decision would apply to all farmworkers.

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PURSUANT TO ORS CHAPTER 87
Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 04/12/2021. The sale will be held at 10:00am by
COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2009 FORD F 150 PU
VIN = 1FTPW14V89FA34903
Amount due on lien \$1,555.00
Reputed owner(s)
STEVEN F & GRACE K ATKINS
OREGON STATE CREDIT UNION

LEGAL
NOTICE OF CLOVER COMMISSION BUDGET HEARING
TO: ALL OREGON CLOVER SEED GROWERS
Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held pursuant to ORS 576.416 (5), on Wednesday, May 5, 2021, at 7:00 a.m., via a Zoom call, upon a proposed budget for operation of the Clover Commission during the fiscal year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. At this hearing any producer of Oregon grown Clover seed has a right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget, a copy of which is available for public inspection, under reasonable circumstances, in the office of each County Extension Agent in Oregon. For further information, contact the Clover Commission business office, P.O. Box 3366, Salem, Oregon 97302, telephone 503-364-2944. The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. Please make any requests for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodation for persons with disabilities at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting the Commission office at 503-364-2944.

LEGAL
Notice of Oregon Strawberry Commission Public Budget Hearing
NOTICE HERBY IS GIVEN that a public meeting will be held pursuant to ORS 576.416, the Oregon Strawberry Commission (OSC) via ZOOM on Tuesday April 20, 2021, at 10am for the purpose of receiving comments on the Commission’s proposed budget for the fiscal year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022. At this meeting, any producer of strawberries in the state of Oregon has the right to be heard with respect to the proposed budget.
Zoom <https://zoom.us/j/3970636110>
Meeting ID: 397 063 6110
Call-In number: 1-253-215-8782
Copies of the proposed budget are available at the commission office, 1827 NE 44th Ave, Suite 315, Portland, Oregon 97213 and online at: oregon-strawberries.org. Any questions may be referred to the Oregon Strawberry Commission office at 503-274-5458.

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2018 DODGE CHARGER 4DR
VIN = 2C3CDXCT9JH180869
Amount due on lien \$1,535.00
Reputed owner(s)
PAUL M SCHWEND & ANDREA G GASPAR
REGIONAL ACCEPTANCE CORP

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2015 BMW M4 CP
VIN = WBS3R9C59FK330367
Amount due on lien \$1,435.00
Reputed owner(s)
JUSTIN CRUZ ESQUIVEL
IQ CREDIT UNION

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2016 FORD EXP LL
VIN = 1FM5K8HT1GGB62987
Amount due on lien \$1,435.00
Reputed owner(s)
ARTURO ABEL ANDRADE OLVERA
INROADS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

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Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 04/05/2021. The sale will be held at 10:00am by
COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2015 TOYOTA COROLLA 4DR
VIN = 2T1BURHE1FC368591
Amount due on lien \$1,435.00
Reputed owner(s)
LUIS REYES MERIDA
TOYOTA MOTOR CREDIT CORP

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Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 04/05/2021. The sale will be held at 10:00am by
COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2018 SUBARU FORESTER 4DR
VIN = JF2SJAWC6JH536288
Amount due on lien \$1,455.00
Reputed owner(s)
SHU YING LIANG
JPMORGAN CHASE BANK NA

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Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 04/05/2021. The sale will be held at 10:00am by
COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2012 WINN MH
VIN = WDAPF4CCX85600592
Amount due on lien \$1,435.00
Reputed owner(s)
JEFFREY LEE VOSHALL

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Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 04/12/2021. The sale will be held at 10:00am by
COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2005 FORD F350 PU
VIN = 1FTWW31Y05ECC00790
Amount due on lien \$1,515.00
Reputed owner(s)
JOHN SELDON COMSTOCK

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Notice is hereby given that the following vehicle will be sold, for cash to the highest bidder, on 04/05/2021. The sale will be held at 10:00am by
COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
2885 NATIONAL WAY WOODBURN, OR 2015 HONDA ACCORD 4DR
VIN = 1HGCR2F82FA081258
Amount due on lien \$1,435.00
Reputed owner(s)
LAMIN DAMPHA
COLUMBIA CREDIT UNION